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Mrs Michelle Cuskelly  
Headteacher  
St Laurence's CofE Primary School  
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Coventry  
West Midlands  
CV6 7ED

Dear Mrs Cuskelly

### **Short inspection of St Laurence's CofE Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 19 March 2019, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The visit was the first short inspection carried out since your school was judged to be good in March 2015.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

You and your staff are committed to giving your pupils the best start in life. On your appointment, you rightly identified that academic outcomes, especially in the early years and key stage 1, were not high enough. Together with external consultants, you set about identifying precisely what needed to be done to improve outcomes for all groups of pupils.

Since your appointment you have gained the respect of staff, parents and pupils. A clear direction has been set, with tight systems of accountability, to ensure that all groups of pupils make the progress that they should. Together with the leadership team, you have introduced efficient systems of planning to improve the quality of teaching across the year groups. A culture of reading permeates the school. All classrooms have attractive reading corners. Pupils say that they are delighted with all the new books in class libraries. This has had a very positive impact on their attitudes to reading.

Together with governors and staff, you have ensured that the school's self-evaluation is accurate and ties in closely with your current school development plan. Any identified areas for development are supported by whole-school training. Staff are clear how to use assessment information from school tests, and this has had a positive effect on the progress of all groups of pupils. You have set a very clear

educational direction in the relevant improvements that you have made. Leaders at all levels understand their roles and responsibilities in bringing your clear vision for improvements in pupils' outcomes into reality.

The high standards you and your leaders have achieved in reading and mathematics and the recent improvements in writing mean that pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education. Differences are also diminishing between the attainment of disadvantaged pupils and that of other pupils nationally.

Parents and carers who responded to Parents View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, expressed great satisfaction with the school. Parents who have children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are delighted with the progress that their children make in learning and managing their behaviour. The parents I interviewed said that the school is the focal point of the community and that there are excellent working relationships with all staff. All parents said that they would recommend the school to another parent and that their children are safe and happy.

Your pupils are polite, courteous and live up to your school's Christian mission statement of: 'Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.' Pupils speak with pride about their school and the way that differences are respected. They value the many opportunities that they have to demonstrate leadership, such as being members of the active school council or as friendship buddies. Morale in the school is high because teachers see that, due to their hard work and your clear direction, standards are rising.

You have successfully addressed most of the areas for improvement from the last inspection. The teaching of mathematics is now secure, resulting in Year 6 pupils' attainment being above the national average. All groups of pupils now have a strong grasp of number bonds and multiplication tables. Pupils have opportunities to use their mathematical skills in different subjects, and problem-solving activities are linked to real-life experiences. Teachers' knowledge of pupils' starting points has improved and tasks are more frequently matched to their needs.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Leaders ensure that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Governors, several of whom have undertaken safer recruitment training, make sure that all the necessary safeguarding checks on staff are made and that all staff have up-to-date knowledge on keeping children safe in education. Governors also ensure that regular checks are made on risk assessments to keep children safe.

Throughout the school, pupils' well-being is paramount. Staff are vigilant. They know their pupils well and are attuned to spotting any potential problems. They take all concerns very seriously and pass on any worries to senior leaders, who ensure that these are followed up. Records relating to pupils who are vulnerable or at risk show well-documented details of discussions, actions taken, involvement of external agencies and resolutions achieved.

Pupils demonstrate a very good understanding of how to keep safe because of well-planned learning experiences. They speak confidently about how to stay safe online and understand the importance of sharing any concerns with a trusted adult.

### **Inspection findings**

- Together we looked at the effectiveness of teaching in key stage 1 to ensure that pupils attain the expected standards or above in reading, writing and mathematics. We discussed the 2018 dip in key stage 1 attainment, and that the most able pupils' attainment was too low.
- You set about redesigning curriculum planning, identifying gaps in learning and improving resources. For example, in mathematics, pupils are given 'anchor tasks' which enable teachers to determine their pupils' prior learning. Difficulties that they might have encountered are then systematically explained. You want your pupils to be inquisitive and curious learners. Your newly planned curriculum enables pupils to find answers to central questions such as: 'What is it like to live in the Amazon rainforest?' Pupils are given opportunities to explore their understanding through books such as 'The Great Kapok Tree' by Lynne Cherry. This has a positive impact on their acquisition of vocabulary and their understanding of the conditions in the Amazon rain forest.
- Underachievement has been successfully addressed. Standards are rising in key stage 1 for reading and mathematics. The vast majority of pupils are working at age-related expectations, including the most able. Standards in writing are improving but remain just below those expected nationally. However, in some lessons, teachers did not allow sufficient time for pupils to practise their guided writing. In addition, some writing tasks lacked sufficient stretch and challenge for the most able pupils.
- In 2018, key stage 2 attainment in writing was not as strong as that attained by other pupils nationally. In response, teachers are meticulously covering the full range of writing genres, but they are moving on too quickly. This results in some pupils not fully consolidating what they have learned and repeating both spelling and grammatical errors. This prevents them from writing at the standard that they are capable of.
- You use the extra funding allocated for disadvantaged pupils well. Historically, your assessment systems for identifying these pupils' specific gaps in learning were not effective. Information from recent pupil-progress reviews shows that having implemented new assessment systems, teachers now know which pupils need particular types of support. As a result, differences are diminishing between the attainment of disadvantaged pupils and that of other pupils nationally.
- We observed the teaching of phonics, an area that you have worked on with your teachers since your appointment. The recent training given to staff means that all sounds are being correctly pronounced and pupils are developing a range of strategies to tackle unfamiliar words. Your records show that the progress in reading of all groups of pupils is improving. However, when I heard several pupils read from Year 2, they did not read with sufficient intonation to engage an audience.

- Early years provision has much improved and the dip in outcomes in 2018 has been addressed. The indoor and outdoor environments are conducive to learning, and children are making good progress in most of the areas of learning. This is because of a well-structured timetable, well-focused adult intervention to improve speaking, listening and thinking skills and well-planned outdoor play.
- Children's good personal and social skills allowed them to concentrate well on their chosen activity and to work diligently with the adults. However, several children did not form their letters accurately or spell correctly. This prevented them, including the disadvantaged children, from making better gains in writing and spelling.
- Attendance is improving due to the stringent measures that you have put in place to encourage hard-to-reach parents to bring their children into school. The attendance of pupils with SEND has improved and their persistent absence has been reduced.
- Leaders and managers have been effective in dealing with pupils who have behavioural difficulties. Pupils with poor behaviour have been subject to some exclusion. Through the school's support and guidance, the behaviour of these pupils has improved markedly and exclusions are falling.
- Good working relationships exist with outside agencies that offer support for excluded pupils. Your in-house systems for reintegration after a period of exclusion are effective.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers help pupils in key stage 1 to develop their skills of intonation when reading to an audience
- more time is allocated for pupils to practise guided writing to ensure that all groups of pupils, including the most able, write at the standard that they are capable of
- teachers in the Reception classes help children form their letters accurately and spell correctly.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, the director of education for the Diocese of Coventry, the regional school's commissioner and the director of children's services for Coventry. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Dr Bogusia Matusiak-Varley  
**Ofsted Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection I met with you, other school staff, a group of governors, including the chair, and parents. I also spoke with the school improvement partner of the multi-academy trust. I had discussions with pupils and heard them read. I looked at the 23 responses to Parent View, 22 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire and 42 responses to Ofsted's pupil questionnaire. I visited lessons with you and looked at work in a selection of pupils' books. I considered the school's self-evaluation. I took into account outcomes from pupils' test results. I read a range of documentation, including that related to safeguarding and child protection.